

21. PROTECTIVE METHODS FOR SNAKES FROM EXTERNAL INFECTION OF MITES

Snakes are sometimes attacked by mites in nature as seen on rat snakes, *Ptyas mucosus* collected from nature for the study of their behaviour, breeding and biology. Snakes are usually free from parasites.

Sometimes, a few showed the presence of either larvae of mites or adult, or both as ectoparasites on the body. If such infected specimens are kept with other snakes, the mites are transmitted to one another. These mites carry micro-organisms which may produce fatal diseases. As the mites are able to travel from one vivaria to another, it is necessary to examine freshly caught snakes for mite infection. In case a snake is found to be infected with mites it should be segregated and treated.

The preliminary sign of infection is the presence of whitish deposits of mite feces on the body scales of the snake. If the snakes are then carefully examined, the presence of mites of 1.00 ± 0.25 mm size can be seen as black dots on the body. The young mites can be seen as the moving dust particles on the scales of the snakes. Acute mite infection is fatal for the snake.

The following treatments and precautions are used to keep the snakes mite-free in the serpentarium.

- i) Fresh caught snakes should be very carefully examined for mite infection

as ectoparasite before being added to the serpentarium.

- ii) Infected snakes should be immediately segregated.
- iii) Infected snakes and cages should be thoroughly cleaned.
- iv) Infected snakes should be bathed several times in a tub containing gentle warm water and then wiped up with soft cotton cloth.
- v) All the mites should be removed from the water before immersion of another infected snake.
- vi) Infected cage should be washed with boiling water to kill the mites and their young.
- vii) During the cleaning of the infected snakes and cages, care should be taken not to allow the mites to spread in the serpentarium.
- viii) In segregated and separated snakes vivarium strips of "Anti mite Vapona insecticide" should be hung. With the help of this insecticide strips these mites disappear from the cages in couple of days.
- ix) Vapona insecticide can be bought from Shellster Limited, 70, Brompton Road, London, SW3, England.
- x) DDT is not to be used for spraying.

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